

Remarks to the Community at Osan Air Force Base, South Korea November 22, 1998

I think the sergeant did a fine job under unusual circumstances. Let's give him another hand here. *[Applause]* He did tell Congressman Abercrombie not to make his introduction too short, but I think he was a little bit embarrassed by having the truth told.

Sergeant, we thank you for your heroism and your service. We thank two of your fellow airmen who helped you in that rescue mission, Staff Sergeant Thomas Metheny and Brian Stump. And we thank all of you for your service. And we thank all of you for your service.

I want to thank Congressman Abercrombie for his fine remarks. He's here with a delegation that includes Senator Max Baucus of Montana, Congresswoman Patsy Mink of Hawaii, Congressman Earl Pomeroy of North Dakota. Anybody here from North Dakota? There is one man up there with his hand up; another one. The reason I introduce them is it's very warm here, for them, compared to North Dakota. *[Laughter]* And Delegate Robert Underwood from Guam.

General Tilelli, General Hurd, General Dordal, General Dierker; members of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces; Ambassador and Mrs. Bosworth; our Secretary of Commerce, Bill Daley, and the National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger, and all the other members of our administration who are here; the family members and the men and women of the United States Armed Forces, I am honored to be here with you. I'm glad to see you out here in good spirits. I'm sorry you've had to wait awhile in the cold wind, and I'm glad we're starting early.

Let me say that I know that supply is an area of great expertise and importance, but just looking around the crowd today, it seems to me that the parkas are a little unevenly distributed. *[Laughter]* So I'll try to give a fairly brief speech.

What I have to say to you is simple. I am very proud of the work you do, U.S. Forces Korea, the 7th Air Force, the 51st Fighter Wing, all the 607th Group, the 631st Air Mobility Support Squadron, the soldiers and airmen, the sailors and marines, the Korean military personnel who are here, all of you. And I came, more than anything else, to say on behalf of all the

American people, we thank you for your service to the United States.

As I also look at this vast sea of highly representative and diverse faces, I am reminded that it was 50 years ago this year, in 1948, when President Harry Truman courageously ordered the integration of America's Armed Forces. Now our Armed Forces are a model of unity and diversity for the entire world, people of different origins coming together, working together, for the common good.

I am proud of that, and so should you be, because though Harry Truman made the decision 50 years ago, it is you 50 years later who have fulfilled his vision and made it work. Osan Air Base is a community with stores and restaurants, homes and classrooms. In fact, back at the White House, we looked on the Internet and found the page of the Osan American High School. Listen to this; this is what the students modestly described their website as. They said it is "the most masterfully designed high school website of them all." I want to commend the designer for his or her extraordinary confidence. *[Laughter]*

I'd also like to commend the Department of Defense school system, one of the unsung heroes of our military service. I thank the teachers and the administrators here and throughout the world for your commitment to our children's future.

Osan Air Base is an important symbol of our commitment to liberty. It was just a few miles from here that United States soldiers first engaged enemy forces in the ground combat of the summer of 1950. And Americans gave their lives in the Korean war on the very grounds of this base. And Osan Air Base is a vital post in our ongoing determined effort to protect that liberty, shoulder to shoulder with our strong Korean allies.

No one should doubt today our joint commitment to freedom. It is stronger than ever. And Korea, under the leadership of President Kim Dae-jung, embodies that, for he as well as any person alive knows that the struggle for freedom requires strength, courage, and a lifetime of

dedication. President Kim faced prison and persecution, death threats and death sentences, because he stood up for his belief in democracy and because he would not give up his hope that true democracy could flourish here in Korea. Now our countries work together more closely than ever before for peace and human rights around the world.

And none of that could happen without you, the American and Korean military forces. You have maintained the peace for 45 years. And let me say, again not so much to you because you know it, but through you and the media here to all of the American people back home, sometimes it's easy to forget that even in peacetime, military work is difficult and dangerous. Tensions have gone up and down on this peninsula over the years, but always there are risks.

I talked about, just a moment ago, the distinguished gentleman who introduced me and his fellow airmen who risked their lives to aid others. Just a few weeks ago, 50 miles from here, four Americans and one Korean soldier lost their lives returning from important training missions. Let me say their names: Private Joseph Biondo, Private First Class Joey Brantley, Specialist James Buis, Sergeant Brian Walsh, and Corporal Kim Yong Ku. We honor their service. We mourn their loss in the cause of peace and security. May the American people never forget this work is difficult and dangerous, and we owe you a lot for doing it.

America strongly supports President Kim's strategy of engagement with North Korea. In the 5 years since I last met with our troops along the DMZ, we have seen some hopeful signs. There have been peace talks, and over the summer, for the very first time, United States Command and the North Korean military began general officer talks aimed at preventing problems along the DMZ.

But unfortunately, not all has gone well. Lately, signs of danger have intensified, with incursions from the North, provocative missile tests, and the question of a suspect underground installation. So we must remain vigilant. And thanks to you, we are.

One of the greatest threats the world now faces is weapons of mass destruction. And though our attention lately has been focused on Iraq's efforts in that area, North Korea is also a major concern. Here at Osan, you are critical to this most dangerous battleground, de-

terrering and, if necessary, defending against chemical and biological attacks.

Let me reaffirm the view of the United States: North Korea must maintain its freeze on and move ahead to dismantle its nuclear weapons program, as it has agreed to do. It must comply with its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It must halt its efforts to develop and proliferate chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles.

We will continue to press North Korea to take these steps for peace and security. But until it fully commits itself to a constructive role on this peninsula, we must remain ready. And thanks to you, we will. America will continue to do what it takes to promote the security of our citizens and our friends and allies, to be a force for peace as we have been in Haiti, in Northern Ireland, in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in the Middle East. Our ability to succeed in promoting peace is uniquely due to the fact that we can back up our diplomatic efforts, when necessary, with military strength. And that depends on you, the finest Armed Forces in the world.

We ask so much of you, to travel far from home, to work long hours, to risk your lives. We ask so much of your families, lengthy separations, career and school transitions. We owe an awful lot in return, at least the training and support you need, the tools to do your job—from high-tech equipment to the most basic spare parts—and the quality of life you deserve.

I spend a lot of time addressing these issues with Secretary of Defense Cohen, with General Shelton of the Joint Chiefs, with other leaders of our military. While our current state of readiness is sound, we have to ensure we're prepared for the future. To move us in the right direction, I asked the Congress to approve \$1.1 billion in additional funds for readiness and recruitment in this year's budget. And I'm happy to say the Congress came through.

We obtained almost \$2 billion in emergency funds to cover unanticipated operations in Bosnia. We shifted another \$1 billion in existing defense funds to readiness needs. I've asked Secretary Cohen to prepare budget and policy proposals aimed at addressing these needs for the long term. And I've approved pay raises that will significantly reduce the gap between military and civilian pay. *[Applause]* I ought to quit while I'm ahead. *[Laughter]*

I want you to know that, working with Congress and the Joint Chiefs, we will continue to make our top priority your readiness: readiness for our first-to-fight forces like the soldiers I met earlier today from the 2d Infantry Division; readiness for our sailors in ships at sea, so vital to our efforts, particularly now, to contain the weapons of mass destruction threat of Saddam Hussein; readiness for our strategic and tactical air forces, crucial in meeting our security challenges in the Gulf, in Bosnia, here in Korea, indeed, all around the world.

Thursday is Thanksgiving. I know that your loved ones back home are thinking about you here, proud of your accomplishments, your service, your kindness, and your strength. I'm happy today to be bringing to you some prepaid phone cards generously provided by AT&T so you can call your families and friends across the ocean for free.

I hope that all Americans—all Americans, not just those who receive a call on Thanksgiving Day—as they sit down to their turkey and give thanks for all our blessings, will consider the

debt of gratitude we all owe to our men and women in uniform. You have made the world a better place, and you will continue to do so. You have made us very proud, and we will continue to be very proud.

I thank you. I wish you well. God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:46 p.m. at the U-2 hangar. In his remarks, he referred to M. Sgt. Tony Avalos, flight engineer, 31st Special Operations Squadron, who introduced the President and was credited with saving the lives of two aircraft crash victims in June; Gen. John H. Tilelli, Jr., USA, Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, United States Forces Korea, and Combined Forces Command Korea; Lt. Gen. Joseph E. Hurd, USAF, Commander, and Brig. Gen. Paul R. Dordal, USAF, Vice Commander, 7th Air Force; Brig. Gen. Robert Dierker, USAF, Commander, 51st Fighter Wing; and U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Steven W. Bosworth and his wife, Christine. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Micronesian Island Leaders in Agaña Heights, Guam November 23, 1998

Thank you very much, Governor and Geri. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm delighted to be here. I want to begin by thanking Dan and Ehlysa for their wonderful art work, and all the other children who gave me this. I will read this on the way home and treasure it always.

I'd like to thank Congressman Underwood for joining us, and for joining us on the long trip to Japan and Korea we have just taken, along with Senator Baucus and Congressman Pomeroy and Congressman Abercrombie. I'd like to thank the Lieutenant Governor, Lieutenant Governor Bordallo, who is, I believe, now the longest serving member of the Democratic National Committee. We thank her for her service.

Governor Gutierrez has been a good friend of mine and a great advocate for the people of Guam. He and Congressman Underwood I think clearly give this island the most forceful, clear, and detailed advocacy that it has probably ever had. And I thank him for inviting me here. I promised him I would come, and I'm only

sorry it took me so long to keep my word. I can tell you now, just looking out at this view behind you, I don't want to leave. And I'm trying to think of some reason to stay. *[Laughter]*

I'd also like to say a particular word of appreciation to the leaders of so many islands who have joined us today: Governor and Mrs. Tenorio of the Northern Marianas; Governor Sunia of Samoa; the Presidents of the sovereign states of Micronesia who are freely associated with the United States, President Nakamura of the Republic of Palau, President Kabua of the Marshall Island Atolls, President Nena of the Federated States of Micronesia who is joined by the Governors of his States. Let's give them all a big hand. I am delighted that they are here today. *[Applause]*

As I said, I have been invited here several times by the Governor and the Congressman. Three years ago, Hillary had a chance to come